

it holds for the foreseeable future. Azerbaijan and Karabagh have exchanged prisoners of war and accomplished other agreements. Yet this cease-fire is fragile, and does not constitute the basis for a permanent solution. Azerbaijan's current refusal to recognize Nagorno-Karabagh as the second party to the dispute is neither constructive nor realistic. To the extent that the positions taken by the U.S. and the international community are contributing to Azerbaijan's intransigence, we must reassess those policies in light of the effect they might be having.

The Republic of Armenia must play a special role in the peace process. I am spending most of this week in Yerevan in meetings with government officials, and discussions over Armenia's future role as guarantor of Nagorno-Karabagh's security and economic viability, pursuant to international agreements.

The people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh have turned adversity and devastation into advancement, economic progress and the hope for a future based on long-term peace. Surrounded by hostile neighbors, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh look to the United States and the international community for support in their commitment to democratic principles and a market economy. As the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, I am here to learn more about the plight of the Karabagh people and to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Clearly, the people of Karabagh have shown their courage and determination to fight for their homeland—to die for it, if necessary. Nagorno-Karabagh's Army of Defense has shown the ability to control strategic territory. Your sovereignty is not just a matter of future discussion or negotiation—it is a matter of fact. In establishing an independent homeland, you have won the war. My goal and my pledge is to help you win the peace.

HONORING VIKTOR
CHERNOMYRDIN

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, last week an extraordinary event took place here in the United States. The Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Viktor Chernomyrdin, was the special guest of a dinner hosted by the Russian Jewish Congress and attended by business and political Jewish leaders all across America. During the ceremony, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was presented an award from the president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Mr. Vladimir Goussinsky, in recognition of his commitment and efforts to insure religious freedom and liberty in today's Russia, particularly the 1.5 million Jewish citizens now living in that country.

Many of my colleagues in the Senate and House also attended the dinner. Congressman TOM LANTOS who moderated and offered some poignant remarks about his own experience as a survivor of the Holocaust, was also presented an award along with former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn.

For many of us in Congress who attended the event and have been actively involved in Soviet Jewry over the years, this was a long-awaited and richly satisfying moment. It was not expected in our lifetime to see the estab-

lishment of a Russian Jewish Congress in Moscow, nor did we ever expect to see a Russian Prime Minister on our soil proclaiming support for the fundamental rights of the Jewish inhabitants of that country.

Mr. Speaker, the Russian people and their leaders are coping with the challenges and even hardships inherent in forming a democracy and market economy. It is not a pretty picture, to be sure, by what we see in the daily press. We know democracy is in its infant stage and largely untested as is the economy, which is undergoing a painful transformation and still lacks full public support. However, Russia has made surprising strides in respecting the inalienable rights of its citizens. Where once there was suppression of religious beliefs, we now see churches and synagogues being restored. The old state prohibition on immigration has been replaced with relative freedom of movement both inside and outside Russia.

The Russian Jewish Congress choose to publicly recognize Mr. Chernomyrdin's record in full view of United States Congressmen and high ranking officials and business and organizational leaders and present an award to him for his public commitment to preserving Jewish culture and rights in that country.

In presenting the special award, Mr. Goussinsky made reference to a recent event which took place at a sacred Site, which is the burial place for the millions who perished in what is in Russia called the Great Patriotic War. At this place a new synagogue has been built and at the commemoration ceremony, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin laid the first stone and concluded his remarks with the word "Shalom." Mr. Goussinsky also noted that in today's Russia there are still different opinions and attitudes and the fact that Prime Minister Chyernomyrdin would make such an appearance carried historic importance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a second historic event, which is the establishment of the Russian Jewish Congress in January 1996. At the urging of Jewish leaders in the United States and Israel, Mr. Vladimir Goussinsky assumed the leadership for its formation and is now serving as its first president. As such, it is the first attempt to unite the country's foremost Jewish business, public, religious, political, academic and cultural leaders and will also give identity and purpose to the Jewish culture, which has so long been repressed in that nation. The congress has approximately forty branches throughout the Russian Federation that contribute to their own communities.

During 1966, the congress launched the construction of a Holocaust memorial synagogue as part of the national World War II Memorial Park in Moscow. The Congress held the ground-breaking ceremony for the Holocaust memorial synagogue in October of 1996, which was attended by Viktor Chernomyrdin. It was the first Jewish event in Russian history attended by a Russian Prime Minister.

I applaud Mr. Goussinsky, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and other leaders in Russia for their efforts to create self sustaining, proud and independent Jewish communities in Russia, just as they exist all over the world.

ETHICS PROCESS REFORM

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing, along with Representative DAVID DREIER, a resolution to reform the House ethics process by having private citizens help investigate charges of Member misconduct.

It has been clear for some time that the process under which the House considers disciplinary action against Members is in need of serious reform. Major breakdowns in the process over the last several months may mean that the House is finally ready to make the needed changes.

The reform that Representative DREIER and I are urging was develop during our work on the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, which we led during the 103d Congress. The joint committee was charged with considering and recommending institutional changes that would make Congress more effective and help restore public confidence in the institution. Ethics process reform was a major focus of the joint committee, and we considered it at length. The proposal that the joint committee recommended with broad, bipartisan support is the one we are introducing today.

Our proposal would help restore the integrity of the House ethics process by involving outsiders in the investigation of ethics complaints against Members. The Speaker and the minority leader would jointly appoint a pool of 20 independent factfinders to be called on by the Standards Committee for ethics investigations as needed, on a case-by-case basis. These individuals would be private citizens, and might include, for example, former Members or retired judges. Lobbyists and other individuals with business before the House would not be eligible. In a particular case, the Standards Committee could call upon four or six of these independent factfinders to investigate charges of misconduct against a Member. They could question witnesses, collect and examine evidence, and then report their findings of fact and recommendations to the full committee. The committee would then make recommendations to the full House, and the full House would make the final decision on whether sanctions are appropriate.

This proposal still retains an appropriate role for the Standards Committee and it does not remove from the House its constitutional responsibility to police its Members for official misconduct. It simply turns over the investigatory phase of the ethics process to private citizens. Involving outsiders in the process in a meaningful way has several advantages. First, it will help restore public confidence in the process by reducing the inherent conflicts of interest involved when Members judge fellow Members—either that they are protecting a friend and colleague or are misusing the ethics process to attack an opponent. Second, it will help ensure that ethics complaints are acted on by the House more quickly. The addition of ordinary citizens to the process would force action on cases that could be held up indefinitely under the current system. Third, it will alleviate the enormous time burdens on